

CHOICE+ Dining Room Checklist

Think about the dining room you are interested in assessing. Answer the following questions individually or as a team. The following page provides some ideas to start making changes and improve the dining environment so it is welcoming, comfortable and supports a more enjoyable mealtime experience for residents.

Layout	YES	NO
Can team members easily see each resident from anywhere in the dining room?		
Can team members easily and quickly get to residents who may need assistance if there was an emergency?		
Is it easy to move around in the dining room without running into obstacles or clutter?		
Is there a mix of seating arrangements for residents to choose from? (e.g., some singles, doubles, small and large group seating)		
Is there a place for a more private dining table?		
Are there less than 20 residents in the dining room?		

Furniture	YES	NO
Are there adjustable tables?		
Do the plates stand out color-wise from the placemat or tablecloth?		
Is there a clock on the wall that residents can see?		
Is the menu posted where residents can see?		
Are there decorations (e.g., plants, art work, curtains)?		
Is the furniture similar to what you might have at home?		

Lighting/Sound	YES	NO
Is there soft, non-overhead lighting?		
Is there lots of natural light?		
Is there little or no glare on the floor or tables?		
Is there the potential to play music?		
Is there little or no extra noise (e.g. scraping dishes or grinding medications)?		

Ambiance	YES	NO
Is the dining room open between meals for resident or family use?		
Can residents access food or beverages during or outside of mealtimes without needing a key or permission?		
Does it smell like food throughout the dining room to signal the beginning of the meal?		
Can residents see outside (e.g. garden) from where they sit?		
Does the dining room feel comfortable and inviting (i.e., not sterile or institutional)?		

Adapted from the Dining Environment Assessment Protocol, Chaudhury, Hung, & Keller 2014.

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What can you do to improve?

Did you answer “No” more than “Yes”? Consider the tips below to make dining in your home more welcoming, comfortable and enjoyable for residents.

Layout

1. Rearrange furniture to make it easier to support every resident, and ensure there is enough room for those using walkers or wheel chairs to move around comfortably.
2. Create options for flexible dining by having tables for individuals, small groups or family-style.
3. Think about other places in the home where you can have special meals or a change of scenery. If you have a crowded dining room, this can help even if you only do it occasionally.
4. Clear any obstacles (e.g., empty chairs, extra carts) or clutter out of the dining room.
5. Fewer people in the dining room allows for a more intimate and personalized dining experience. If you can't reduce the number of people in the dining room, think of ways to create a more intimate environment (e.g. partial room dividers).

Furniture

1. Use adjustable furniture to cater to individual resident needs.
2. Use homelike furniture and decorations (e.g., plants, artwork that residents have picked or enjoy).
3. Use tableware (e.g., tablecloths, placemats, centerpieces such as flowers) and utensils (e.g., no plastic) that feel like home.
4. Use table cloths or placemats that contrast with the dishes to help draw residents' attention to the food on their plate. For example, if you use light coloured plates, pick a tablecloth or placemat that is a dark, rich colour.
5. Keep table settings simple so the table top isn't over-crowded.
6. Have a clock in the dining room with the meal times posted.

Lighting/Sound

1. Play music that residents will like, making sure it isn't too loud. Especially consider those closest to the source of the music.
2. Make sure the dish cart is out of sight and scraping of plates is done out of the dining room.
3. Keep the med cart out of site, and try not to grind/distribute medications during the meal.
4. Identify other sources of extraneous noise and try to eliminate them.
5. Ensure the lighting is pleasant (not too bright, but not too dim), try bringing in some lamp lighting, and close curtains or blinds if there is a lot of glare from the windows.

Ambiance

1. Make sure the dining room smells like food by preparing some items on the neighbourhood, like baking bread in a bread maker, or putting on a pot of coffee.
2. Make sure the temperature of the dining room is comfortable. Ask residents if they are too hot/too cold.
3. Turn off the TV during meals and try to encourage conversation.
4. Make sure every resident has a nice view (e.g., see outside, or beautiful artwork or flowers).

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